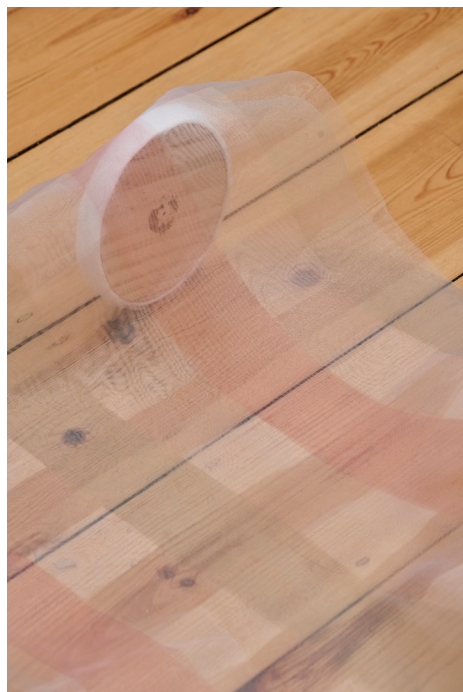
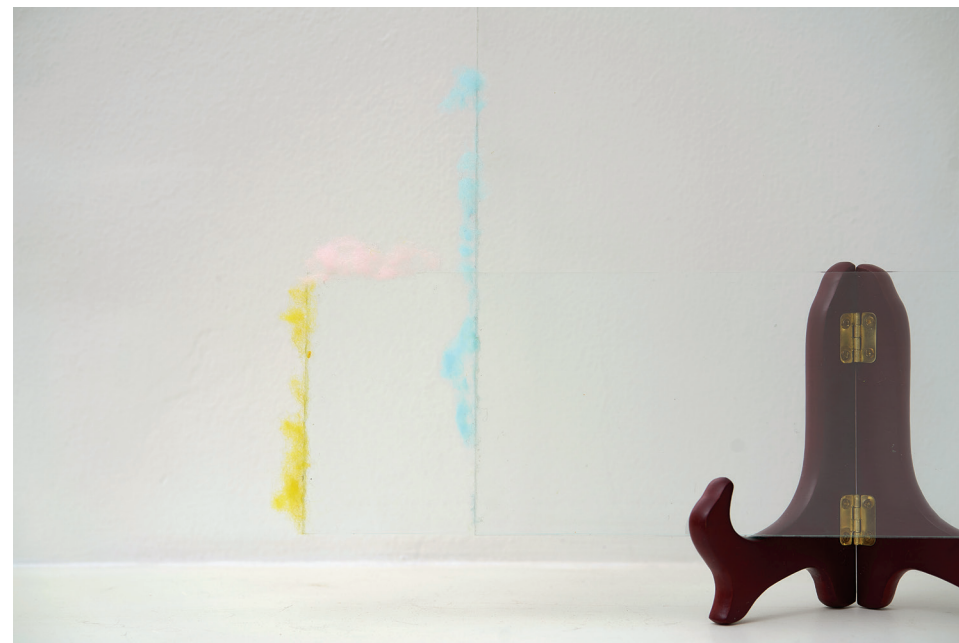


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We recognise and acknowledge the Kaurna People as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

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Cover: 'A line, a curve, a river, a song', 2020, decorative plate-stand, photo frame glass, felt, dimensions variable

Inside: 'A line, a curve, a river, a song', 2020, tulle, blind pull cord, dimensions variable

Back: 'A line, a curve, a river, a song', 2020, (left hand side) wood, felt, organza, dimensions variable (right hand side) found photo frame, dimensions variable

Images: Sam Roberts

Sonja Porcaro

A LINE, A CURVE, A RIVER, A SONG

SAUERBIER HOUSE CULTURE EXCHANGE

RESIDENCY EXHIBITION

12 December 2020 – 30 January 2021

SUPPORTED BY CITY OF ONKAPARINGA

ONKAPARINGAARTS 



smoke / steam

Mist rolls off the ocean. Smoke rises from the fire.

Sonja's interest in found objects engages Sauerbier house as a sculptural object imbued with layers of meaning. Her interventions use the gesture and materiality of domestic space to draw attention to the thresholds that exist within the building. The temporal gaps allow the viewer to slip through time in order to investigate the building as a social, cultural, political space.

The fireplace becomes a site for impasse, a stuck point, somewhere between in and out. She transforms it into a tiny bed, perhaps for a child. A nook within which to rest. The pillow is soot black and sparkles like the night sky. The blanket is checked organza, like an Onkaparinga Wool blanket. On the mantle an ornate plate-stand delicately cradles plate glass from thrifted frames. Sonja has applied plush felt plumes to the gritty, chipped edges of the glass. The boundary is blurred by the softness of the felt. It is unclear what is object, or not-object.

salt / a path / a veil

Sheer, shimmering organza stands in the space as a body, a residue: summer sweat on the back of your knees, catching the hot bus to the beach; a salty tear running down your cheek; damp rising through the foundations; a shaft of morning light through the gap in the blind. Pleasure and grief sit so closely together, like

the warp and the weft of the fabric. In the room the wheels of a small cart are shrouded by a piece of organza, a ghostly figure imagined but not fully formed. Sonja references the colonial wheat industry of the area, lands stolen from the Kurna people. She spoke to me about an incident that took place at Old Noarlunga, in the nook of the river. The road was worn down by passing traffic, surface layers were displaced by drays, revealing a Kurna burial site in what had been the protective bend of the river. The skeletons appeared as if *drawn with white chalk*¹.

A pastime / a picnic

In 1848 E C Frome drew the river at Noarlunga in a sketchbook held in the Art Gallery of South Australia's collection. These early colonial artworks act like passages into the past, the landscape is so familiar. Australian spatial theorist Paul Carter writes that the poetics of Australian space require artists to not simply fall into the rhythm of the landscape, but to unpick the ideology of place, to recognise the already present things within the landscape². Sonja's sculptural investigations seek to make visible, discordant threads embedded in the landscape in order to re-narrate place through a post-colonial lens. There is particular attention to the place of women within the colonial home: a dusting of flour, a picnic blanket spread across the washroom floor, a bulging pocket shaped like a swollen pregnancy (but, look inside,

it's full of ash). I imagine the Sauerbier family picnicking along the bend in the river of Frome's sketch, the same way my own family has. And hold that in tension with the knowledge that Ngangkiparinga is the women's river.

A song / a lament

Sonja's lo-fi recordings along the river's edge layer the lapping poem of the water with the crunchy, whipping wind and distant screaming of children. The river is a site for leisure but is also a mutable space which holds gaps in history, erasure, convergence. Mirning woman and academic Ali Gumilya Baker describes the interstitial space of sound, the breath in and out. She writes of her identity as being '*like a squeezebox; when you pull the squeezebox of your memory all the hidden parts are uncovered*.'³ Baker exposes the folds, the movement, the swell and release of song and memory, identity and belonging. In parallel, Sonja's song is not so much about the sounds themselves, but the space between them.

Adele Sliuzas

When I was a child I swam at the mouth of the river. I was told that the water was deep, there were strong currents. In the shadow of the stained, striated cliffs, I watched the wind ripple across the sapphire water. I felt the tide tug at my legs.

The river has a story, which it tells through gently shifting banks, high tides, floods and deep, shady rock pools. Ngangkiparinga is a threshold, holding histories in tension. Sonja Porcaro draws on these tensions of landscape and architecture to develop a body of work that is tender, yet brittle. Through a series of sculptural interventions, she creates loops and passages.

¹ Passage from the South Australian Register, 1851, published in *A Fortunate Locality- A History of Noarlunga and District*, David J. Towler, 1986

² Paul Carter, 'The Forest in the Clearing: The Environmental Poetics of John Shaw Neilson' in Jennifer Rutherford & Barbara Holloway *Halfway House: The Poetics of Australian Spaces*, 2010, p148

³ Ali Gumilya Baker quoted in Rutherford & Holloway p6